

SYSTEM CONFIGURATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

September 16, 2004
NOAA Fisheries Offices, Portland, OR

1. Greetings and Introductions.

The September 16, 2004 meeting of the System Configuration Team, held in the NOAA Fisheries offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Bill Hevlin. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the items discussed and decisions made at that meeting. Some of the enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to attach to this summary; copies may be obtained by calling Cathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420.

2. Turbine Passage Survival Study, Phase II.

Martin Ahmann from the Corps noted that the original FY'05 estimate for the turbine survival program was \$855,000; the current cost estimate is \$1.1 million. Ahmann distributed copies of the FY'05 TSP workplan (Enc. C) and briefed the SCT on its contents, including the comprehensive biological index test (BIT) plan (\$213,800), the John Day BIT planning and preparation (\$304,450), Ice Harbor turbine direct survival testing (\$382,200), Alsom minimum gap runner (MGR) testing of Lower Granite (\$27,700), Ice Harbor model investigations to support DOE and rehab (\$21,500), TSP support for ongoing and future turbine rehabilitations (\$26,600) and project/program management and regional and national coordination (\$124,500).

Ahmann noted that DOE has provided \$192,000 in funding to cover a part of the Ice Harbor portion of the study; he described the Corps' study coordination efforts with DOE. Kim Fodrea noted that, when she had first heard of the Ice Harbor turbine replacement, it was because one of the units was leaking oil. What happened to that sense of urgency? she asked. Initially, there was a big push to get an oilless hub in operation, so we could evaluate that technology, Ahmann replied. Unit 2 is leaking oil, but there are serious problems with Units 1 and 3 as well. Initially, this was going to be a single-unit replacement, he said; I wouldn't say there isn't a sense of urgency to replace those units, but when we're spilling 100% of the river, those units don't operate all that much. We may have pushed the issue somewhat from the TSP side, in terms of trying to cancelling the contract to replace Unit 2 and putting more effort into

evaluating what kind of design should replace the Ice Harbor units, Ahmann said. Replacement in kind was deemed to be less important than replacing those units with something that might be more beneficial, if that could be done at little or no additional cost. However, at this point, while there is still some sense of urgency, there is no set schedule for making these improvements.

And what are the benefits of waiting until FY'06? Fodrea asked. In part, because it saves some funding in FY'05, and in part because the model won't be ready until March of 2005, Rock Peters replied. He added that there may be some potential to scrub the \$1.1 million estimate further; the main priorities are obviously John Day and Ice Harbor. Gary Fredricks suggested that the Corps leave the funding level for this project somewhat plastic, at this point; there needs to be considerably more dialogue between the Corps and NOAA before we can buy into the BIT concept. In other words, said Fredricks, let's not get too hung up on exact dollar amounts at this point. I'd like to work in a more linear fashion, if possible, Fredricks said. It was agreed that Fredricks will sit down with the Corps' TSP staff for a thorough discussion of the overall program direction. In response to a question from Peters, Fredricks said he remains uncomfortable with the current Corps approach to biological index testing; however, he considered the TSP program overall to be a very positive step, and looks forward to working with the Corps to improve it. In the interim, it was agreed to keep the TSP placeholder at \$855,000, at least for the time being.

3. Portland and Walla Walla District FFDRWG Updates.

Hevlin said the only outstanding Walla Walla District FFDRWG question of which he is aware is whether or not to lower the flow deflector on the RSW bay at Ice Harbor; he said his understanding is that the District is leaning toward not modifying the deflector in 2005. We'll see how the deflector performs at its current elevation, he said, and adjust it in future years if needed. Peters said the next Portland District FFDRWG meeting is scheduled for October 28.

4. SRWG Update.

Tom Lorz said Ron Boyce has requested an extension on the salmon managers' SRWG comments, given the need to provide comments on the BiOp. If we don't receive your comments until late October, that will mean a month and a half's delay in awarding comments, Peters replied. Lorz said that, in his opinion, the October 28 date proposed by Boyce is too late; he said his goal is to provide the salmon managers' draft comments to the corps by late next week. Peters said that, if the salmon managers can at least provide him a list of the studies to which there are no strong objections, that would be very helpful. He noted that, at minimum, he needs to give the Corps' tag manufacturer a sense of the minimum order for this spring by October 1. We're pretty much in agreement with the program for the lower river, at least at Bonneville and The Dalles, with the exception of whether or not we need to do one treatment or two, and whether we need to tag steelhead as well as chinook, Lorz said; we're also more or less in agreement on doing the full-meal deal at Lower Granite and Ice Harbor, although Lower Monumental and McNary may fall off the table. At Little Goose, we're interested in tagging enough fish to get forebay distribution and FPE, as well as some baseline survival data, if

possible, said Lorz.

5. Continue Prioritization of FY'05 CRFM Program Measures.

John Kranda distributed the most recent revision of the FY'05 CRFM measures worksheet; he said none of the budgetary numbers have changed significantly since the last SCT meeting. The group briefly reviewed this spreadsheet, as well as the potential shift in emphasis that may be imposed once the 2004 Biological Opinion is finalized, including the potential that surface bypass in the lower river may become a higher budgetary priority than Snake River surface bypass. We may want to think about beefing up the McNary component of the CRFM program while cutting back on Little Goose and Lower Monumental, Kranda said. Lorz observed that the BiOp calls for a transport test in the Lower Snake by 2007; we have been told repeatedly that the only way that will happen is if RSWs are installed at all of the Lower Snake projects. However, given the number of SCT members absent today (none of the state representatives were able to attend), we can't even begin that discussion, said Kranda.

The group discussed the uncertainties inherent in the FY'05 program, given the new direction in the BiOp and continued uncertainty about the size of the FY'05 CRFM appropriation. It was observed that the Lower Monumental and Little Goose juvenile studies may slide lower on the priority list; Ice Harbor, Lower Granite, The Dalles and Bonneville are higher priorities, in terms of juvenile passage studies. Fredricks said he would like to see Bonneville completed in FY'05.

From BPA's standpoint, are there any line-items that should be a higher priority? Hevlin asked. The Little Goose survival study, Fodrea replied. Hevlin noted that a conference call to further discuss this issue may be needed prior to October 21.

6. Next SCT Meeting Date.

The next SCT meeting was set for Thursday, October 21. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.